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# GODWARD

A

RECORD OF RELIGIOUS PROGRESS

BY

PAUL CARUS

God leadeth down to Hell and bringeth  
up again.—Tobit, xiii. 2.

CHICAGO

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## Preface.



FROM my childhood I was devout and pious; my faith was as resolute as that of Simon whom, for his firmness, Christ called the rock of His church. When growing up I decided to devote myself as a missionary to the cause of Christianity. But alas! on inquiring into the foundations of the fortress which I was going to defend, I found the entire structure undermined. My despair turned into sadness, my exasperation into irony; I grew an unbeliever and scorned Christianity. Yet in the depths of my soul I still remained thoroughly religious; I soon aroused myself and gathered together the fragments of the wreck I had suffered, for my heart still clung to its lost treasures. Thus I began to formulate in strictly scientific terms a religion that should be


based, not upon belief, but upon the well-ascertained experiences of the human race alone ; and to my surprise I found that the main truths of the old faith remained the same,—only what I had received in my childhood in the garb of parables, as allegories and symbols, I now learned to formulate with scientific precision. The letter was gone,—gone beyond the hope of ever being redeemed,—but the spirit remained. The sentiment and the moral aspiration were upon the whole the same ; but what I had seen formerly as through a glass darkly I now saw face to face. Thus I returned through a period of negativism and unbelief to a new position of affirmation, which, broader in its scope and resting on a solider foundation, comprised under an evolutionary aspect the truths of both former positions.

Nothing of the scientific rigor of criticism which characterizes the period of negation has been surrendered, and yet all the hopes contained in the religious faith of my childhood have found their fulfilment.

How many are the hearts that investigate like

me! How many are they, who having turned doubters, have ever since remained agnostics and never even attempted to regain a position of affirmation! They have criticised and condemned. Having taken offence at the errors of the letter in its literal significance, they have rejected with the letter the spirit!

These poems and the conditions under which they were written at different periods of life are not artificial products of a poetic imagination, but genuine, instantaneous photographs of the soul's attitude in successive stages of its religious development. May they prove helpful to others who are travelling on the same path!





## Confidence in God.

---

THE WORLD is void of rest  
And stormy as the seas  
Whose waves so turbulent  
Are moved by every breeze ;  
They swell, they break, they roar  
And never are at ease.

But midst the foamy surge  
There towers a mighty rock ;  
The billows dash around ;  
Yet, though they storm and mock,  
The rock withstands their scorn,  
Not moved by any shock.

Thus in this turbid world  
Firm stands God's Name and Word.  
My heart knew not of rest ;  
Through storm and mist it erred,  
Until it refuge found  
Here, like a frightened bird.

Here is security,  
Here truth and hope and peace.  
Then let the billows roar  
And let the surge increase :  
Here, on the rock we find  
From all distress release.

The troubles of this life  
With firmness I defy.  
My soul and heart rely  
On God, and, when I die,  
He will my faith and hope  
With fulness justify.

## The Blind Man.

---

*The existence of God is self-evident like daylight.*

A MADMAN in the street  
Cries out "There is no light!"  
The wretch lacks in himself  
The faculty of sight.

He is not blind by birth ;  
He longed some years ago  
By reason to conceive  
Light and its fiery glow.

His eyes were sharp and clear,  
Nothing in them was ill :  
He saw God's lustrous sun,  
And yet he doubted still.

He peered into the glare  
Of brightest solar light,  
Until his eyes had lost  
The faculty of sight.

No peradventure now  
His unbelief can stay  
For blindness deeply veils  
The glamour of the day.

Despairingly he cries,  
“ Ah, who can now resist  
The truth so manifest  
That light does not exist !

“ And even if you prove  
That there exists some light,  
I won't believe ; I have  
Experienced, I am right.”

Thus rushing through the streets  
He ceases not to bawl,  
“ The sun does not exist ;  
There is no light at all.”



## The Friar.

---

A FRIAR, still in youth,  
Enters the abbot's cell ;  
He modestly begins  
His misery to tell  
In hope confession will  
Insurgent doubts dispel :  
" Despite my fasts and prayer  
With me no peace doth dwell."

The old man kindly looks  
In his repentant face.  
Quoth he, " Thou must believe  
In God and in His grace !"  
" Ah, father, that I could  
These thronging doubts efface,  
And simply as a child  
The hope of Christ embrace.

My conscience nevermore  
From sin can find release.  
The more I ponder them,  
The more my doubts increase,

Oh, to have faith in God !

Oh, that this pain would cease !  
Alas ! Is there no truth,  
And holdeth life no peace ? ”

Old tomes on musty shelves  
Are ranged the cloister round.  
Their authors anxiously  
Had sought truth's depths to sound,  
In vain ! The mystery  
Is none the less profound.  
Now, through the books, methinks,  
Compassion did resound.

The abbot wistfully  
Gazed on him in his pain.  
A silence long and sad  
Did all his heart explain ;  
But in his thoughtful eyes  
Was writ this doleful strain :  
“ Thou look'st for peace and truth  
In this our world in vain.”

## The Gospel.

---

I HEARD in Christmas time,  
Mingled with merry chime  
Of bells, Gospel proclaim  
The Saviour's holy name ;  
Who, by the Father sent,  
Victoriously went  
Into this wretched life  
To carry out our strife ;  
Whose blessed blood redeems  
From sin and Satan's schemes.  
I heard the Christmas bell,  
I heard the Gospel well,  
My eye grew dark and dim.  
The song of Cherubim  
I sadly listened to —  
Oh, would that it were true !

## Defiance.

---

*Difficile est parodiam non scribere.*

LIFT up your eyes, ye heads of brass ;  
Ye skulls of iron, yield !  
For superstition soon will pass,  
Critique is in the field.

Critique is like the morning star  
Which ushers in the day,  
Shines on the march and guides from far  
Truth's champions in the fray.

Then fear not, faint not, halt not now,  
The cause of Truth is strong.  
To Truth shall every creature bow  
And sing the triumph song.

Illumined are the heads of brass,  
The skulls of iron yield ;  
For superstition soon will pass :  
The Truth must win the field.

## Pantbeism.

---

WHO has created with a power almighty  
The golden stars there in the skies?  
Who orders them with such a lustrous  
splendor  
At their appointed time to rise?

Who did assign their spheres to all the  
planets  
And this our earth, who has it wrought?—  
No Deity, created by our Fancy,  
Produced these worlds all out of naught.

No one has made by spell the earth and  
heavens,  
No wizardlike magician god,  
Whose government is a continued marvel,  
Whose wilful deeds are queer and odd.

The laws of Nature are not like ukases,  
That human monarchs may proclaim.  
No supernatural exterior ruler  
Has shaped the world in wondrous frame.

Law dwells within as features uniformal :  
There's naught beyond and naught behind ;  
And from within the sentient soul-life  
blossoms  
Developing the human mind

There is no Matter as a crude material ;  
Nor Force abstractly does exist.  
Both are united like man's soul and body !  
And through each other they subsist.

For Universe is the eternal Cosmos  
Not governed by a god or elf ;  
Its life springs forth from its own vital  
sources,  
And self-creating moves itself !

## A New Religion.

---

✓ THE Creeds of old are crumbling ;  
And were their revelation  
The only hope in living  
Life would be desolation.  
But lo! a new religion  
Bursts from the germs decaying ;  
A new faith in our bosoms  
Is growing, light-displaying.

Great truths with broader outlook  
New missions have created.  
By purified Religion  
Our souls are elevated.  
New aims, new hopes, new doctrines,  
Old prophecies fulfilling !  
And through our hearts is rapture  
Of progress warmly thrilling.

We do not combat freedom  
Of art, nor that of science.

Nay, both with our religion  
Are joined in firm alliance.  
Though high, our aspiration  
Is yet concrete and real.  
To render life more noble  
Is our sublime ideal.

Of this denomination  
Are they, in life's confusion,  
Who further human progress  
And sweep away illusion ;  
Who have ideals dearer  
Than self and self-existence,  
And love them, although knowing  
Their vast, enormous distance.

Thinkers who muse and ponder,  
Instructors theoretic ;  
And poets whose ideas  
Are radiantly prophetic ;  
The warrior, who for Freedom  
Fights and for Freedom dieth ;  
The great, whose noble fortune  
With their souls' greatness vieth ;



The hand, who with heart's trouble  
For wife and children toileth ;  
The man who doth his duty  
E'en if his fate him foileth ;  
And he, who kindly comforts  
The sick, who gladly shareth  
His bread with his poor neighbor,  
Our badge and symbol beareth.

## Light and Truth.

---

LIGHT is the symbol of truth and as  
Deity proves everlasting ;  
But our daylight on earth passingly fadeth  
away.

Truth in itself is eternal ; we rightly revere  
it as holy ;  
But in the spirit of man quite problematic  
is Truth.

## Sonnets.

---

### 1. Reflection.

---

ALAS! Reflection cruelly destroys  
Our Fancy's dreamy castles built in  
air,

Which, though not real, are so lovely fair!  
Imagination luringly decoys

Into her paradise with glistening toys,  
Until Reflection roughly comes to tear  
Those fair illusions;—and she leaves us  
bare,

Leaves us deprived of all our childhood  
joys.

Yet she arouses from fictitious dreams!

If the destruction of our idols bitter,  
If very ruthless, pitiless it seems:

Yet is it salutary; the false glitter  
Is only lost; for life we are much fitter,  
Since Fancy's fogs are cleared by Reason's  
beams.

## 2. Idols.

---

THE charming fairy-tales, which gently  
soothe

Our childhood's easy griefs, must melt  
away ;

And sad Reality will soon dismay  
The bright phantasmal Idols of our youth.

But from them our Ideals spring, in sooth.

The childish frolic shall the man display.

As fruit grows, whilst the blossom must  
decay,

Thus from romantic errors springs the  
truth.

But when the creed of Christianity

Breaks down, it merely is the husk,  
which shows

The evil fate of transient vanity.

Out of the bursting germ the fruit-tree  
grows,

And Idols of religion will disclose  
The high Ideal of Humanity.

### 3. The Stars.

---

YE golden stars in silent holy night  
The day breaks ; and in mighty com-  
petition

Your brilliance dims mid rapid demoli-  
tion.

Ye and your splendor, beautiful and bright,

Ye fade away in his victorious light.

Thus dies romance ; poetic superstition  
Of darker ages suffers abolition.

In light ye die, light-bearers of the night.

And yet ye are not dead, ye golden stars ;

Ye are still living in the brighter ray ;

'Tis not your light the glorious sunshine  
mars ;

It is your mere appearance. True, your  
beauty

Is lost, a sacrifice of faithful duty ;

But beauty rises new in dawn of day.

#### 4. The Ideal.

---

**B**E not afraid lest in this world the Ideal  
Should disappear, or like a flower  
fade ;

For she is not mere Fancy's fickle shade.  
She is a glowing presence, true and real.

Still firmly an alliance hymeneal  
Joins her to Human Progress, as a maid  
Is wedded to a hero, whom his blade  
Protects ; thus faithfully he shields the  
Ideal.

Wondrously from this bridal union springs  
The life which, breathing through the  
human race,  
In ardent youth shines forth from every  
face.

It lends to the inventor fancy's wings,  
And stirs the poet's heart, who gayly sings  
The Ideal's beauty and the Ideal's grace.

## Godward.

---

**N**EARER, my God, to thee,  
Nearer alway ;  
E'en though thou other be  
Than prophets say ;  
Other thou art, but higher,  
Bidding our souls aspire,  
Godward alway.

Doubt comes from God, in sooth,  
Though conquering creeds ;  
Doubt prompts our search for truth  
And higher leads.  
Who on doubt's path ne'er trod,  
Ne'er saw the face of God ;  
Doubt truthward speeds.

Science the burning bush  
Where God doth dwell !  
Truth and its onward rush  
Nothing can quell.  
God is the truth that guides,  
Heaven where love abides ;  
Sin's curse is Hell.

God the eternal cause  
Of truth and right ;  
Oneness of cosmic laws,  
Reason's true light.  
God, though nowhere confined,  
Yet in the human mind  
Showeth his might.

God is man's truthward call,  
Noblest desire.  
He's in life cosmical,  
Love's holy fire.  
Thou who art All in All  
God superpersonal,  
Lead thou us higher.

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